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## SERMON DXCII.

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### THE DEMANDS OF SINNERS UNREASONABLE.

"He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe on him."—MATT. xxvii. 42.

THESE words were uttered respecting Jesus by the Scribes and Pharisees, after they had nailed him to the cross. They contain a confession that he had wrought miracles in saving others, and a charge that he was unable to save himself. They contain, also, a demand that he would prove his claims to the Messiahship by coming down from the cross, and a promise, that, if he would do this, they would receive him as the Messiah. It strikes us at once that this demand is unreasonable even to effrontery.

But, my hearers, the question, "Will you receive Christ as your Saviour?" was not presented to the Jews of his own generation alone; it is a practical question to every hearer of the gospel; it is a practical question to you, and, as such, without doubt, you have all made it a subject of deliberation and decision. Yet many of you would tell me, should I ask you, that you have not accepted Christ as he is offered in the gospel; that you do not exercise repentance for sin and faith in the Saviour; that you have never experienced that new birth, without which, as Jesus himself declares, no man can see the kingdom of God. I suppose you have some reason for this. I am not at liberty to suppose, that, as reasonable beings, you are acting on this momentous subject without giving to yourselves some reason which satisfies, or at least silences your consciences, and relieves you

from the unpleasant conviction that your conduct in this respect is absolutely without reason, and therefore foolish. And probably you are making demands, on compliance with which you think you would accept the Saviour. "If the way of salvation were plainer, or if it were different, if my own circumstances in this respect or in that were altered—if God would exert a more powerful influence to awaken me, I would give my heart to him." Just so the Jews, in the very act of crucifying Christ, had their reason by which they justified themselves—"though he saved others, he cannot save himself; therefore we do well to reject his claims as the Messiah, and to crucify him as an impostor." They also had their demands, on compliance with which they promised to receive him; "Let him come down from the cross, and we will believe him." It is my purpose—it may startle, I hope it will not offend you—it is my purpose to compare your reasons and demands with those by which the Pharisees justified themselves in crucifying Jesus. I intend to show that yours are as really unreasonable as theirs. My subject is, **THE UNREASONABLENESS OF THE DEMANDS OF IMPENITENT SINNERS.**

I. You make demands which are unreasonable, because compliance with them would defeat the divine plan of redemption.

This was one characteristic of the unreasonable demand of the Pharisees. If Christ had come down from the cross, the work of redemption would never have been finished. Similar demands are often made by ungodly men—demands that Christ would come down from the cross, that he would save us in some other way than by his atoning sacrifice, and his blood. Many, when aroused to the importance of gaining God's favor, I have known to say, "If, to win heaven, it were only necessary to go on the most wearying pilgrimage, or to build a costly temple, or to afflict my body by fasting, or scourging, most gladly would I do it; but to be saved by repentance and faith in Christ seems so dark and difficult, I cannot come to God." This fact, familiar to all pastors who have had much intercourse with those who are seeking everlasting life, proves that the pilgrimages, the self-inflicted torments, the hermit's life, which abound where superstition reigns, result from a principle universally present in the human heart. If men could only scourge, and flay, and torture themselves into heaven, how gladly would they undertake it. If Christ would come down from the cross, they would gladly save themselves by their own sacrifices. If it were only penance instead of penitence, how gladly would they obey the requirement.

Of the same character is the prevalent disposition to seek salvation by good works alone. Men plead that if they are kind in their families, and to the poor; if they do not lie nor cheat, they shall win everlasting life; while they forget that, if they have been honest toward men, they have robbed God of the honor due unto his name; that, much as they talk of doing as they would

be done by, they fail of keeping even this part of the law, which, like all the rest, is "exceeding broad;" that even if the claim that they do not lie, and do not wrong any one, is well-founded, this is only a negative virtue, only a claim that they avoid certain sins, not that they practice all the positive and perfect holiness which is required; and they forget that even if their lives are outwardly correct, their hearts are vile in God's sight. Hence, the first step of the sinner, when awakened to his danger, usually is to make resolutions to lead a better life, striving, by his own righteousness, to win God's favor, and forgetting Christ's words, "without me ye can do nothing." If God would propose to him, sinner as he is, to save himself by the law, to be so holy, to do so great good works, that no reward less than eternal blessedness would meet the merits of his wonderful goodness, he would undertake the hopeless task; but, as a lost sinner, to plead before the cross for mercy, and to receive salvation as a free gift from God, to lead a holy life, not in his own strength, but by divine grace; not for the sake of purchasing heaven by merit, but out of humble love to the Redeemer—this he is not willing to do. His demand is that Christ come down from the cross; it is a demand, compliance with which would set aside the cross, and defeat the divine plan of redemption by grace.

II. Your demands are unreasonable, because you create yourselves the very difficulties which you claim to have removed. Jesus was moving among the Jews, working the most convincing miracles. They seized him, and nailed him to the cross: then they demanded that he should undo what their own malice had done—"Come down from the cross, and we will believe." A similar unreasonableness belongs to many of your demands. You say that you are so immersed in business that you have no time to attend to religion; that worldly cares crowd at every moment on your mind; that, if you try to think of God, your thoughts wander to the world; that you cannot awaken in your own mind an interest in religious subjects; that, if you resolve to give more attention to religion, your old habits prevail, and your resolutions are broken; that, though you know you are a sinner, you cannot feel it, and, though you know Christ is lovely, you cannot love him. But why are these things so? Who is responsible for the existence of these difficulties? Is it not your own hand that has plunged your soul into this flood of worldliness, with its "temptations, and snares, and many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition?" Is it not yourself who have nurtured by indulgence these strong habits of sin, fixed your affections on it, and deadened your sensibility to its guilt? With what reason can you urge, as your apology for inaction, the chains which your own hands have fastened on your souls? Wherein is it more reasonable than the plea of the Pharisees, who first nailed Christ to the cross, and then urged the fact that he hung there as the justification of his crucifixion?

III. Demands are unreasonable which require additional evidence of the importance of religion, when sufficient has been already given.

Unreasonableness of this kind characterized the demand of the Pharisees. They had seen the Saviour's miracles—healing the sick, casting out devils, raising the dead—miracles as great as it would have been to come down from the cross. It was unreasonable in them to propose that, if a single miracle should be added to the multitude already given, they would be ready to receive Jesus as the Christ. Precisely similar is the unreasonableness of many of your demands. They imply that you have not sufficient evidence of the reality of religion, though you have evidence in abundance. Your demands imply that a trifling addition of the very same kind of evidence would remove all difficulty, and make you a believer at once.

You imagine, for example, that the reason why you do not accept Christ, lies in the dimness of spiritual realities. You say, "If I had lived in Christ's day, and had seen his miracles, I should have been his disciple;" or, "If I should be caught up, like Paul, into the third heavens, or if one should come to me from the dead, I should be persuaded." But why delude yourself thus? You do not doubt that Christ came into the world to save sinners; why, then, do you ask for additional evidence? You have no doubt that he wrought miracles and rose from the dead; why do you imagine that one miracle more would make God's service pleasant? Do you ask that one should come to you from the dead, and do you not know that messengers have come from heaven to earth, even the Son of God himself? And his message—the Word of God—have you not in your own hand? Why do you imagine that additional miracles would quench your love of the world and make you delight in Christ's service? Your demand is like that of the crucifiers of Jesus, when after all his miracles, his holy life, his divine teachings, they said, "Come down from the cross, and we will believe." The Saviour has said, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." It would be easy to show why it would be so; that all the wonders which you ask would fail to lead you to Christ any more than the wonders which the Bible records; but time forbids; I leave you with the Saviour's solemn asseveration of the fact, "If ye hear not Moses and the prophets, neither would you be persuaded though one rose from the dead." In addition, I will only suggest to you the fact, which may well awaken your suspicion, that your reasoning is mere self-delusion, that the Pharisees once presented the very same plea. At the very moment when they were plotting the death of the Son of God, they were lamenting the martyrdom of the ancient prophets, and saying, "If we had been in the days of our fathers, we should not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets." What but a like self-delusion do you exhibit when

you say, "If we had lived in the days of Jesus, we should have been his loving disciples," or urge any plea which implies that your neglect of religion is owing to the distance and obscurity of spiritual realities?

Other demands exhibit the same unreasonableness. The reason most commonly given for indifference to religion, is the inconsistency of professors. Speak to men on the necessity of their repentance, and, in three cases out of four, before the conversation closes, they will parry the appeal by saying that the lives of members of the churches are not consistent with their profession. I wonder it never occurs to you, that this very fact is itself a proof that the gospel is true; for the Saviour foretold that there would be many who would profess to be his servants whom he never knew. If such false professors had not always existed, His word would not have been proved true. But aside from this, your plea involves an unreasonableness like that of the demand of the Pharisees, that Christ would come down from the cross; for it assumes, that if you only had a little more evidence of the reality of religion, precisely like that of which you already have much, you would repent. I presume every one of you knows some whom he acknowledges as real Christians;—perhaps a venerated parent, a beloved wife, a son, or daughter, now passed into the heavens. And beyond the circle of your personal acquaintance, among those who forsake kindred and home, and toil through life for the salvation of the heathen, among those who explore the vaults of prisons and the cellars of cities, to do good to the outcast and the wretched, among those who toil in obscurity, and from house to house, to carry Bibles and to extend the knowledge of the gospel, among those who in this nineteenth century are suffering imprisonment, impoverishment, and even persecution unto death, for the love of Christ, you must believe that there are many who exhibit the beauty and power of true religion. Nay, you may go back through all the past, and look at the PAULS, the HOWARDS, the MARTYNS, whose lives have adorned the history of man, and at the countless company of the martyrs of our God. Consider, also, all the beneficent influences of Christianity in enlightening and purifying mankind. You are no stranger to these triumphs of the cross, to these demonstrations of its divine power. And yet you plead, that, because A, B, and C, do not live consistently with their profession, you will neglect religion, and treat it as if it were a worthless imposture. Like the Pharisees, who, after seeing Christ's many miracles, promised that, if he would work one more, they would believe, you, after beholding the power of the Gospel in the heavenly lives and happy deaths of your own acquaintance, in imparting to those once vile the spirit of Christ, in transforming bloody and licentious heathen into gentle and pure disciples of the Prince of Peace, in ennobling the world's history with philanthropists, reformers, and martyrs for the truth, and in quickening, guiding, and purifying the progress

of mankind; after all this evidence you say, that if a few inconsistent professors of your own acquaintance would live as they ought, you would condescend to consider the claims of your Saviour, your Creator, your God.

Similar are all the reasons for neglecting religion, founded on its mysteries. One says he will not accept Christ because he does not understand the doctrine of election; another because he cannot explain all the mysteries of the Trinity; and yet another declares that he cannot understand why sin and evil exist in the world at all. Forgetting how many dark things revelation has made plain, forgetting especially that it has made the path of duty so plain "that he may run that readeth it," such a man will not obey the plain requirements of the gospel, he will not take a step to save his own soul from hell, till all mysteries are explained, all objections removed, and all the questions of idle curiosity answered.

You may see, in another aspect, the unreasonableness of all these demands by contrasting your conduct in spiritual things with your conduct in temporal. When you began the business in which you are now engaged, did you suppose that every person engaged in it so completely understood and so perfectly applied its principles as to secure a fortune, or even to save himself from ruin? Did you suppose every one engaged in it was perfectly honest? Did you stop and say, I will have nothing to do with this business till I know there are no bunglers nor knaves engaged in it? When you commenced your business, did you perfectly understand it? Were there no questions which you could not answer? And were there no serious objections and difficulties in the way? Were you sure of success? Do you not know that in worldly affairs, men never wait for certainty, but act on probability?—that they never wait for the removal of objections, but act in spite of them? If men never engaged in worldly business till all who are engaged in it managed it wisely, honestly, and successfully; if they never acted except on certainty—never acted till everything dark was cleared up, and every objection removed, they would never act at all. How unreasonable in your spiritual concerns to adopt principles of action, which, should they be adopted in temporal affairs, would bring all the business of the world to a dead stand!

IV. It is unreasonable to demand more, when God has already done so much in your behalf; especially when you have not made improvement of what he has done.

The Jews might have known from the ancient prophecies, that Christ was to suffer an ignominious death. The whole history of Jesus had coincided with what had been predicted of him. His stupendous miracles, his divine teachings, his holy life, his very position on the cross were proofs that he was the Messiah. It was unreasonable—it was mockery and cruelty, to ask him in the hour of his agony to work another miracle for the satisfaction of his murderers.

The sacrifice of atonement is now completed. Christ has passed through his humiliation, he has tasted death, he has ascended to heaven, he ever liveth to make intercession for us. Now from the mercy-seat comes the assurance, "All things are ready; whosoever will let him come." After all that God has done, the only reasonable course for every sinner is, to come to Christ, to yield to him and be saved. Every reason for delay, every demand for something more, is an implied charge that God has not done enough for your redemption. It is gazing on the manger at Bethlehem, on the tempted sufferer in the wilderness, on the agony of Gethsemane and the dying anguish of the cross, and then demanding that the Son of God sink to a deeper humiliation, suffer a severer anguish. It is denying God's declaration, "All things are ready." It is denying the Savior's dying words, "It is finished." It is declaring that the work of redemption is not complete, the Saviour not worthy to be trusted. My hearers, what could be done for your salvation, which God has not done? What motives could be produced mightier to make you in earnest to win God's favor, to melt your heart in contrition, to kindle love, to rouse you to a life of holiness? What way of salvation more excellent, more complete? What invitations more free and full? What terms of salvation more simple and easy of acceptance? What Saviour more able, more accessible, more lovely? God himself looks at the subject in this light; he sees the unreasonableness of your demands; as if grieved by the implied charge which you bring against him, he condescends to expostulate with you in tones of tenderness, "What more could have been done to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"

And your unreasonableness appears not only in the fact that God has done so much, but also in the fact that, while demanding more, you have made no improvement of what God has already done. You complain, for example, that you have no time to serve God. But, aside from the fact that the greater part of serving God consists in doing the daily business of life with a supreme desire to please him—and it takes no more time to do business to please God, than to do it to please yourself—aside from all this, God gives you fifty-two Sabbaths every year, to be set apart solely to religious uses. What use have you made of these Sabbaths? You complain that the way of salvation is dark. But God has given you the Bible. Have you anxiously studied it, to learn what you must do to be saved? Are you thus studying it every day? You are surrounded by religious books, like Dodridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion*, designed to guide inquirers in the way of life. Do you ever read such books? You have a pastor—do you ever come to him with the inquiry, "Sir, what must I do to be saved?" God has promised to enlighten and guide those who pray to him. Do you pray to God for wisdom?

Do you yield yourself to God for his guidance? You complain that divine influences do not descend on your heart with power sufficient to arouse it from its sluggishness. But God has drawn you by his Spirit? Did you yield to his drawings? Have you not rather grieved him away? Behold the effrontery of your demands, since God has done so much, and you have made no good use of what he has already done.

V. Your demands are unreasonable, because God has proved it by testing them. You have made similar demands before; God has condescended to comply with them, and yet you did not, even then, keep the promises which you had made.

Time and again had the Pharisees asked Jesus to give them a sign, that they might see and believe. Signs he had given them, the most stupendous and convincing: yet they were not more ready to receive him than before. At last, when they were clamoring as usual for a sign, he told them that no more signs should be given them excepting only the sign of Jonah, the prophet; by which he meant that last proof of his Messiahship, his own death and resurrection. And when on the cross he was giving them this last proof, they again clamored for a sign, and promised to believe him if he would come down from the cross. And even after that, when he rose from the dead, they still rejected him. I doubt not that like this has been the history of some of you. You are thinking, perhaps, that, should there be a revival of religion, you would come to Christ. You had thought so before; yet in the last revival were you more disposed to accept Christ as a disciple than you are to-day? You say that if your companions should experience religion, you would go with them to Christ. But what were your feelings when your wife, your child began to hope in the Saviour's mercy? How was it when those neighbors, those intimate friends united with the church? You were young once; then you said, "When the gayety of youth is past, I will begin a religious life." You are older now; gray hairs, perhaps, are on you. But are you more disposed to prayer, to penitence and faith than in the rosy years of youth? Ah, sirs, God has complied with these very demands; but you have not been ready to keep your promises. You are as far from the kingdom of heaven as ever.

VI. Your demands are unreasonable, because, in the very act of making them you admit what justifies your condemnation.

The Pharisees said, "He saved others." They admitted that he had wrought miracles. And although during the earliest periods of the Christian era, there were enemies of Christianity, who spoke and wrote against it with all the ingenuity and learning of the times, yet it is a remarkable fact that not one was found during the life of Christ, or in the period immediately following, who ventured to deny that Christ wrought miracles. So

the Pharisees, in the very act of crucifying him, admitted the reality of his miracles. "He saved others; himself he cannot save." Thus, by the very justification which they attempted, they condemned themselves.

So is it with you. Whatever reason you may give for neglecting religion, you admit its divine authority, its reality, and importance. Were I to charge you with being infidels, you would be indignant at the aspersion. Were I to say you do not respect religion, you would repel the charge as slander. In the very act of giving your reasons for neglecting religion, you are careful to avow your respect for it, and your belief in its importance. And do you not thus condemn yourself? If religion is a reality, it is a reality infinitely momentous. If it is important, it is infinitely important. What is wealth, what is human honor, compared with the favor of God? What all earthly interests compared with the salvation of the soul? What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? What shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Oh, sirs, if religion is important, it is so important that no reason can justify the neglect of it; no reason can justify any conduct respecting it, but that which puts it before all earthly interests, which impels to seek God's favor with uncontrollable and imperishable earnestness; which forbids any rest, till you rest in a good hope through grace of everlasting life. Therefore, in your attempt to justify, you condemn yourselves. Therefore, the all-seeing Judge will pronounce to you those fearful words, "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that religion was important,—why then didst thou not seek my favor with an earnestness corresponding to its importance? Thou wert surrounded with difficulties,—why then didst thou not toil to overcome them with an earnestness and perseverance corresponding to the worth of thy soul? "Out of thine mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant."

#### VII. Your demands and apologies are unreasonable, because they lay the blame of your continued impenitence on God.

After nailing Jesus, by their own malice, to the cross, the Pharisees called on him to come down, and then by his neglect to do it, justified themselves in putting him to death as a self-convicted impostor. Thus, they laid the blame on him. So, if you examine your apologies for neglecting religion, you may find that they involve the same daring impiety; they lay the blame of your continued impenitence on God. You plead that you continue in sin, because the circumstances in which God has placed you are unfavorable to a religious life, or because God has not made the way of salvation sufficiently plain, or because God has not given you enough of his Spirit. The cause is always in God, never in yourself. Like the Jews, who blasphemously charged the blame of their own crime on the suffering Saviour, you charge all the

criminality of your impenitence and disobedience on God. You ascribe it to what God has done or neglected to do, not to yourselves.

But the criminality of your impenitence and disobedience rests on you alone. The real cause why you continue impenitent lies in your own hearty opposition to God, and your aversion to the duties and experience of a spiritual life. No reason, which you can urge, covers this fact from the sight of God, or abates the constant criminality of your impenitence, or your immediate and constant obligation to give your heart to him, to trust in Jesus for mercy, and to devote yourself to his service. When the sinner comes to Jesus, he sees that all the blame of his whole life of impenitence rests on his own head, that God has always been blameless and lovely in all his requirements, and all his dealings, and that he himself stands before God a sinner, whose sins are unveiled, and absolutely without apology or extenuation, deserving the wrath of God. May you thus discover your inexcusable guilt, that you may seek mercy before it is too late. But if not now, at least when you stand before God's judgment seat, you will discover it. The apologies and demands by which you now appease your own consciences, and which you so confidently utter to your fellow-men, you will not then utter to God. Nay, you will not utter them in the secrecy of your own soul. The refuge of lies, which now covers you, will vanish, and you will find yourself standing revealed before God an inexcusable transgressor; revealed to your own inmost consciousness, an inexcusable transgressor. You will be speechless before your Judge. You will see that your life-long neglect of God had no justification or apology; that it was wholly unreasonable and unjustifiable; that you have no plea to break the force of the condemnation which falls on you, or even in the depth of your own consciousness to sustain you with the conviction that it is undeserved. "Every mouth will be stopped, and all the world be guilty before God."

## SERMON DXCHII.

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## THE REASONABLENESS AND BLESSEDNESS OF PRAYER.

"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you."—JAMES iv. 8.

Worshipping with a pious heart is evidently the manner of drawing nigh to God, which the Apostle had in mind when he penned the text. It is elsewhere in the Scriptures, designated in this way:—Says the Psalmist, "It is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord God."—Writing to the Hebrews, the apostle exhorts; "Having a high Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith."

Under the Jewish dispensation, drawing near to God in worship was a more literal thing than it is under the Christian dispensation. In the temple, God had his dwelling place as a king in his palace. There the Shekinah, as the visible symbol of his glory, manifested his presence. There was the mercy-seat; there the altar, and there the offering was to be made to him. Hence his people were required to come to that place, and there wait upon him in the manner of his own appointment.

It will not be understood from this, that Jewish worship was only of this outward, ceremonial character. The *heart* was required of them as well as of us. "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people."—Isa. xxix. 13, 14. Nevertheless, under the Christian dispensation, the worship of God is more strictly of a spiritual character than it was under the former, as is indicated by the Saviour's remark to the woman of Samaria. "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him."—The apostles did not understand this as disowning all outward worship—all expressed devotion; since prayer and preaching the word, baptizing and breaking bread, were afterwards frequently engaged in by them as religious duties. The Saviour's meaning, therefore, must have been simply that what God requires in worship is, that the *heart* be in it; and that such worship may be rendered to him any where.

The duty of worshipping God is no less the dictate of reason and of common sense, than of Scripture. It has been the sentiment of mankind, universally, that children ought to cherish peculiar respect for their parents. So men have always deemed it proper to specially regard and honor those high in authority. Can they who thus honor parents and magistrates, deny the obligation to do homage to HIM who is at once their Maker, their Sovereign and their Judge? Grant that God is in no wise benefitted by the homage we render to him. Certainly no one supposes that we can add any thing to his essential glory. We can place him no higher than he is—cannot increase his happiness. Yet the homage we render to him may exalt him in our own hearts, and among our fellow mortals, and thus his declarative glory be promoted on the earth. It is not, however, my purpose on this occasion to dwell upon the general duty of worshipping God. I design rather to remark on that part of worship, which with peculiar propriety, may be denominated “drawing nigh to God;” and would address you on the *reasonableness* and *blessedness* of PRAYER.

#### I. Its *reasonableness*.

1. *God has enjoined it.*—This may strike you at first as a strange reason to be assigned for the performance of any duty. But it must be counted reasonable to do what God has commanded, and most unreasonable to disregard his positive injunctions.

But has God, in explicit terms, enjoined this duty upon men? Yes, again and again. “Men ought always to pray and not to faint.”—“Continuing instant in prayer.”—“Pray without ceasing.” Many such declarations and commands are to be found in the Scriptures. Now, unless we deny that the Bible is the word of God, or, admitting this, deny his authority over us—a stretch of boldness not to be expected of any man—we must acknowledge that it is our duty to pray; and this implies that it is reasonable.

2. The reasonableness of prayer may be shown from the example of the Saviour. Repeatedly in the New Testament we read of his being engaged in this exercise—at his baptism—at the transfiguration—in the garden. He spent whole nights in prayer. He taught his disciples to pray. They, certainly, counted his example and teachings authoritative in regard to the performance of this duty. And so we often find them after his ascension, supplicating the divine blessing, and receiving it in answer to their petitions. If, then, it was proper and reasonable for the Saviour to pray, and for the apostles to follow his example, on what ground can any man reasonably refuse to do the same.

3. The reasonableness of prayer is manifest when we consider what we are—

(a) As *needy* and *dependent* creatures. Every hour of our lives brings with it wants which must be supplied, or we suffer and die. And while our necessities are thus numerous and pressing, we are utterly unable, apart from the divine bounty, to provide

for a single one of them. Can any sufficient reason be assigned why such creatures should refuse humbly to ask God for his blessing.

(b) As *sinful* and *unworthy* creatures. This might seem to us a reason why we ought *not*, rather than why we *should*, pray. Certainly it must be confessed that our sins strip us of all rightful claim to be heard in heaven, though pleading our own wants. But no one has, or can have any other idea of prayer, than as being addressed to the mercy of God; and when that mercy invites us freely to come and make known our desires, it is most unreasonable (to use no harsher term) in us not to avail ourselves of the privilege.

(c) As *dying* and *accountable* creatures. Who can be willing to go into the presence of God without ever having called reverently upon his name. Who can feel easy in view of future accountability, whose heart has never been sufficiently grateful to acknowledge the Divine goodness, nor sufficiently humble to confess its sins and seek the Divine forgiveness? A prayerless sinner, who is not an infidel in its very worst sense, is as unreasonable a man as exists on the earth. Confessedly living under the eye of God; expecting to die and to stand before him in judgment, and yet refusing to acknowledge his favor in humble prayer! willing to make requests of his fellow men; to send his petition to those in authority, while yet he refuses to ask God for blessings hourly needed, and to render thanks for those incessantly bestowed! If this be not unreasonable, it is difficult to say what is: and if the reasonableness of a duty may be shown from the unreasonableness of neglecting it, there seems no need of saying more on this point. There is, however, another consideration which may properly be named in this connection.

4. As showing the reasonableness of prayer, consider the *benefits* of a persevering attendance on this duty. Not to God, as was before said, as if it could add to his essential glory or happiness in any degree. But to those who pray, and for whom prayer is offered.—Prayer is the way to a life of communion with God—a means of keeping up an acquaintance with, and of growing in the knowledge of God. It is a most excellent, yea, an *essential* means of nourishing the new nature, and of causing the soul to prosper. It is a good preservative from sin; as it is said, “praying will make us leave sinning,” or “sinning will make us leave praying.”—It hath a great tendency, says Edwards, “to keep the soul in a wakeful frame, and to lead us to a strict walk with God, and to a life that shall be fruitful in such good works as tend to adorn the doctrine of Christ, and to cause our light so to shine before others, that they, seeing our good works, shall glorify our Father who is in heaven.” Nor are these all the benefits conferred by it. It prevails with God, as Jacob did, and brings down answers of peace and blessing. The Bible is full of instances in proof. We proceed to consider—

## II. The *blessedness* of Prayer.

### 1. This may be seen in the first place, by considering the *nature of the exercise itself*.

Prayer usually embraces three things,—*praise*—*confession* and *supplication*. The ascription of praise to God is certainly a delightful exercise to every grateful heart. The glory of his nature, and the blessings that flow continually from his bountiful hand, call for expressions of gratitude from every human tongue. “Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!” A grateful heart is burdened with a sense of obligation until it finds relief in rendering a tribute of thanks to Him who is the giver of every good and every perfect gift. We can say with the Psalmist, “It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High.”

Confession of sin is a part of prayer full of blessedness. To the proud heart of the wilful transgressor, such an assertion, I am aware, may seem extravagant, if not indeed false; but the humble child of God who has been brought to see the “*exceeding sinfulness of sin*,” readily admits its truth, as he has often been conscious of it in his own experience. What a blessed hour was that to the poor prodigal when he came to himself, and said, “I will arise and go to my father.” And when he poured his heart-broken confession into his injured father’s ear, and met that loving father’s warm embrace, he felt a joy which a squandered inheritance had never afforded. How far happier was David, the penitent confessor, penning the fifty-first Psalm, than was ever David the king, enjoying the fruit of his murderous sin. And when the repentant sinner bows before his Heavenly Father uttering the publican’s prayer, “God be merciful to me, a sinner,” he experiences in his heart a joy which the world cannot give. It is on the principle of which we are now speaking that days of fasting and humiliation before God are not unfrequently days of the very highest enjoyment to those who observe them. At such times the Scripture is fulfilled. “Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite spirit, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”

Supplication, too, as a part of prayer, is a blessed exercise. To solicit favors from our fellow men is seldom agreeable to us. We are doubtful as to the reception our solicitations may meet with from him to whom we come. We may not find him in a pleasant mood; he may think we come too often; or it may not be convenient for him at the time to attend to our request. Not thus is it with our Father in heaven. His language to us is “Come”—come freely—come often—come at any time. Prefer your requests. “Ask, and it shall be given you.” He may not grant the *very thing* we ask. Yet if that be denied he will bestow other blessings instead; or in some way cause the refusal to sub-

serve our highest good. We may be assured that he will never think the worse of us for asking, even though he sees it best to withhold from us the desire of our heart.

Good when he gives,—supremely good,—  
Nor less when he denies;  
Even crosses, from his sovereign hand,  
Are blessings in disguise.

2. We may learn the blessedness of prayer by its *effect* on the *character* of him who offers it, and also by the blessings *bestowed in answer* to it. To both these benefits we alluded when speaking of the reasonableness of prayer. We remark further,—that the effects of this exercise on the character of him who prays are truly blessed. Prayer is communion with God. It is expressing to him the feelings and desires of the heart. Every one has observed that the effect of frequent intercourse is to assimilate in character those between whom the intercourse exists; they become like each other. Upon this principle, much prayer may be expected to produce heavenly-mindedness. Sin cannot appear so attractive to the soul conversant with the purity of heaven. Earth insensibly sinks to its proper place. Its riches, honors, pleasures, appear to us little worth while we look at the things eternal "not seen." A religion without prayer, is a religion without God. It is impossible for a man to keep in mind a vivid idea of a God, with whom he never communes, from whom he receives no instructions, to whom he prefers no request, and renders no homage. The Bible ignores such a religion.

Consider the blessings bestowed in answer to prayer. Many deny that any connection exists between prayer and the bestowment of blessing. In their estimation it is folly to suppose that God's greatness could condescend to listen to our petitions, or that his counsels would suffer him to answer them. But the book declares that God *does* hear prayer; and instances in proof are recorded on its almost every page. Abraham plead for the righteous in the doomed cities of the plain; Jacob wrestled with the angel until with the morning light came an answer of peace; Moses interceded repeatedly and successfully in behalf of revolting Israel; Elijah shut and opened the windows of heaven; Daniel was heard in the land of his captivity, and the apostles and early Christians were again and again answered while in the name of their ascended Master they plead for the protection of Heaven, and sought blessings for which they had been instructed to ask. The church in all ages has been a witness to the blessed efficacy of prayer. Every humble, faithful Christian, is witness to it.

And what more delightful than to know that, insignificant and sinful as we are, we may yet draw nigh to the great and holy God—may make our requests unto him, assured that if presented with a right spirit they will be heard, and answered in that way

that shall be for our best good. How often have God's children gone with their sorrows to a throne of grace, and, casting their burden on the Lord, felt themselves sustained by the everlasting arms. When difficulties and perplexities increase on every hand, and waves of affliction roll darkly over the soul, then is verified to them the truth expressed by the stanza :

From every stormy wind that blows,  
From every swelling tide of woes,  
There is a calm, a sure retreat;  
'Tis found before the mercy-seat.

What a relief to a mother's burdened heart to be permitted to go to her Heavenly Father and plead for the son she loves, assured that Heaven cares for her! And trusting in God's promises, to believe that in years to come—it may be when she slumbers in the grave—those prayers shall be answered, and that loved, though wayward son, be at length gathered into the fold of the good Shepherd. How gracious the privilege accorded to the church, of coming with all her desires to a mercy-seat made accessible through the blood of her crucified Lord—being heard in his name who is head over all things for her sake. Gathered together with one accord in one place like the disciples of old, her petitions come up with acceptance before Him who is "nigh unto all that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth."

Good men have always been men of prayer. Enoch undoubtedly was such; for he walked with God, and this implies communion with him, which includes prayer. Such, too, were Noah, Daniel, Job, Abraham and Jacob. David was eminently a man of prayer as his Psalms abundantly testify. Allusion has already been made to the Saviour's example in this respect, as also to that of the apostles and early Christians who had both his example and precepts for their guide. In times nearer our own there have been many of like spirit: some standing in the high places of Zion; others moving in humbler spheres—all accustomed often to draw nigh to God in prayer. The way to the throne was familiar to them—communion with God their highest privilege. From the heart they could say with the Psalmist; "I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live."

The text, my brethren, reveals the secret of all true religion. "Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you." When the backslidden Christian returns to a forsaken mercy-seat, and pours the breathings of a penitent soul into the ear of his patient Heavenly Father; when the closet is revisited as a place of sacred communion with the Father of spirits, and there the fainting heart unburdens itself of its crushing load of worldliness and sin: when the family altar has been erected again, and the morning and evening sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving is offered thereon;

and when the prayer circle is re-entered by the wanderer, and his voice is again heard among his brethren supplicating the divine mercy, and pleading the promises of infinite love—then is the joy of salvation restored to that soul, and peace and hope abide there again.

When we, as a church, endeavor unitedly to draw nigh to God, and plead fervently that he will draw nigh unto us that we may walk in the light of his countenance again; when all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking are put away from us, with all malice; and we are kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us; when we can carry our gift to the altar and offer it there without a brother having aught against us, and plead for God's blessing on every inhabitant of Zion; and when the dying sinner's case lies heavy upon our heart, till, like a cart pressed beneath its sheaves, we bear it before God in the name of the sinner's Advocate and Redeemer—then may we hope to see the salvation of Israel come out of Zion. "When the Lord shall build up Zion he shall appear in his glory. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer."

There dwelt at Ayr in Scotland two hundred and fifty years ago a clergyman of more than common piety. Before his conversion he had been remarkable for his daring wickedness. Settled at Ayr, he found a wild, reckless, drinking, fighting people. To them he preached faithfully the gospel of Christ. For them he prayed. He was known often to spend the whole night in the meeting house, alone, in prayer. When at home reclining on his bed, he always kept lying near at hand a cloak, which he was accustomed to throw over his shoulders as he rose again and again to pray during the night watches. His wife, once expostulating with him about it, he replied: Ah, woman, woman; you know not what it is to bear the burden of three thousand souls for whom you must give account. Would that every servant of God possessed the apostolic faith and fervor of John Welsh!

Prayer, my brethren, is a holy privilege. The ear of him who sitteth upon the throne forever, is open to receive our supplications. We may draw nigh to him, and he will draw nigh to us. "I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry." As we raise our feeble voices toward the throne, they seem wafted on angels' wings to our great High Priest who ever liveth to make intercession for us; and perfumed with his precious blood, they are offered at the mercy-seat, where offering of his was never rejected. Then comes down the answer of peace from the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort; the soul feels the refreshing presence of Jehovah. And the Christian, all nerved again for holy enterprise, and clad with zeal as a cloak, goes forth to engage in the work to which God in his providence may call him.

Elijah had felt, in common with his countrymen, the sad effects

of the drought visited upon the land by reason of the wickedness of Ahab, and of the more wicked Jezebel and her court. "And it came to pass, after many days, that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go show thyself to Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth." But the Lord God of Elijah must first be acknowledged by that idolatrous people. After that the prophets of Baal had vainly called upon their god "from morning until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice," "it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice that Elijah the prophet came near and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and of Jacob; let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me; that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it they fell on their faces, and they said, The Lord, he is the God: the Lord, he is the God."—God was ready, having thus been acknowledged, to bestow the blessing for lack of which the land was nigh to perish.

May we not hope, my brethren, that the same God has in store *spiritual* blessings for us? But ere he bestow them he will be honored by his own people. They must come out from the world, the love of which is enmity against Him: must turn from their covetousness, which is idolatry; and, confessing their God from whom they have departed, draw nigh to him that he may draw nigh to them. Then will the windows of heaven be opened, and blessings descend in showers, until the church, like a well watered garden, shall bloom with beauty.

The 20th of June, 1630, was observed as a communion season by the Kirk of Shotts, in Scotland. During the communion-service, there were precious manifestations of the presence of the Lord with his people, who felt they could not separate without further religious exercises on the morrow. A young clergyman\* was appointed to preach. In the morning, while walking alone in the fields, his soul sunk within him as he thought of the duty he was to perform. He felt inadequate to the task. The hour of service came. The minister trembled as he went forward to address the multitude that had assembled, but was sustained and helped in a wonderful manner. He earnestly exhorted the people to seek the Lord while he might be found, and to call upon him while he was near. The word spoken was with power and with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. More than five hundred souls dated their spiritual birth from the awakenings of that hour. It afterwards appeared that the preacher and several others had passed the whole previous night in prayer. Here was the secret of the power which attended that preaching.

Thus God honors his people. "Draw nigh to me, and I will draw nigh to you," is his language. When with importunity and humble faith they present their prayer before him, he will bestow the promised blessing. Witness Jacob at Peniel, "greatly afraid and distressed," because of the anger of his offended brother. "For I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children." Then none could deliver save He who had said to him, "Return to thy country and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee." The God of Abraham and of Isaac was the God of Jacob too. He listened to his pleading servant, yielded to the importunity of his struggling soul, and granted the blessing asked.

Israel's God still hears the cries of his children when pleading for those they love; and when Christians with holy fervor pray for perishing sinners, God is pleased to draw near, and subdue rebellious hearts unto himself. It is instructive to note how, when God is about to revive his work in any place, he begins it by imparting to his people a spirit of prayer, attended with deep humiliation and self-abasement. "In those days, and in that time," saith the Lord, the children of Israel shall come; they and the Children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, saying, come, let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, that shall not be forgotten." "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced; and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for an only son, and shall be in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born."

About the year 1825, a clergyman\* visited the churches of East Tennessee, and proposed to them to observe what was called "the twilight concert of prayer," with reference to the revival of religion. Most of the churches visited agreed to observe this concert. Where the family could come together at the hour proposed, they would then have their evening worship, and in connection with that exercise, pray for the revival of the cause of God, and the conversion of sinners. When it was not convenient for the family to assemble, each pious member of it, in the closet, on the journey, or wherever he might be, alone would lift up his earnest prayers to God for the salvation of souls. Thus, over a very considerable extent of country, from evening to evening, a vast volume of prayer ascended to the throne of God. And "God, merciful and gracious," heard the cries of his children. In answer to their petitions, he caused the influences of his Spirit to descend, "as showers that water the earth." And the wilderness and solitary place were made to rejoice and bloom as the garden

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\* Rev. N. Patterson.

of the Lord. Every church that observed this concert shared richly in the Divine blessing. The entire result can never be known until "the Lord himself shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this and that man was born there."

It is by imparting a spirit of prayer that God begins a work of grace in the sinner's heart. Of Saul of Tarsus it was said: "Behold he prayeth," and his prayer was heard by his compassionate Redeemer. Thus was it with the publican; thus with the dying thief; thus with Cornelius, and thus has it been with multitudes in later times—thus is it to-day. "Then the loftiness of man is bowed down, and the haughtiness of men is made low, and the Lord alone is exalted in that day." "I heard it, but I heeded it not," said a man of a proud spirit; "I heard again, but I hated it as if it were death. And once more I heard it, and my spirit melted. It was as if God himself, with the resistless might of his infinite love, spoke to my inner spirit. I was transfixed. Wonder, fear, hope, shame, grief, love, joy, sprang up in my soul. I wept like a child; and kneeling down before my Saviour and God, with trembling awe, I confessed my sins and sought his forgiveness."

My hearers, are you accustomed to pray? I ask not you, my Christian brethren. No *Christian* can live without prayer. I put the question to others here. Do you *pray*, my friends? It may be that you do not. Possibly some of you, instead of calling upon your Maker in humble prayer, confessing your sins and seeking his pardoning mercy, use his name profanely. Beware! Soon you will be called to confront that God by whose favor you have lived; but whose goodness you have abused, the riches of whose grace you have despised, whose authority you have treated with bold or careless contempt, whose holy name you have profaned? How painful the thought of your coming to a dying hour, your peace not yet made with Him so soon to be your Judge! What an inestimable privilege, *then*, to be permitted to draw nigh to Him, as to your reconciled Father. But fear has taken hold on you. You know not how to approach unto him.

In conclusion,—*Remember*, all ye who neglect or refuse to ask God for his mercy, he assures you you may call upon him when it is too late—call when he will not answer—seek him early, but not find him. Be wise, therefore, I beseech you—to-day. Defer not the work of your soul's salvation. Lest on that awful day, when the heavens and the earth shall flee at the presence of Jehovah, you who have refused to answer when God called, and refused to call while God waited to answer, shall, in your terror and dismay, *vainly* call upon the mountains and the rocks to fall on you, and hide you from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.

The Lord God, who hears prayer, draw you by his love, and save you from the sinners' doom, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

## BELIEVING AGAINST APPEARANCES.

In order to make his children trust solely in him, God sometimes deprives them of the sensible effects of faith on which they were too much inclined to depend. Your experience under these circumstances may be somewhat similar to that of Paul when he said, "We were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life ; but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God which raiseth the dead." The object of God's dealings with you is revealed. You must not trust in yourself. All self-righteousness must fall before the cross, like Dagon before the Ark. Doubtless you have still some self within you. You are seeking self under the garb of humility, and amid these general lamentations over your miseries, which instead of directing your eyes to the Saviour, are perhaps turning them away from him. To deliver you from this delusion, God removes all your consolations, so that you may be obliged to walk simply by faith, and to hope, resting exclusively on the promises.

When you trust thus in God, you are, even when in the most desponding state, not less acceptable to him, than if you were full of joy and love. Doubtless a heart full of love and joy is an inestimable blessing, when at the same time we rest our hope of salvation and our confidence in the merits of Christ alone. Nevertheless, I know not if there be anything more honoring to God, than the state of that man, who, feeling the depth of his misery, finding in himself nothing to rest upon, conscious of nothing but emptiness, weakness, and opposition to the will of God, rests upon the promise of God and gives him glory, saying, "God cannot lie : Hath he said and shall he not do it ? Hath he spoken and shall he not bring it to pass ?"

They whose faith is condemned in God's Word, are they who believed against all appearances, and in opposition to all discouragements. Abraham is commended because, "not being weak in faith, he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief ; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." Noah is commended, because upon the testimony of God, he believed contrary to all appearances, in the coming of the deluge, and for one hundred and twenty years continued to give credit to the threatenings of God, notwithstanding the apparent delay of the execution. Paul commends those who died in the faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them and embraced them. Christ commended the faith of the woman of Canaan, who persevered in following him, notwithstanding the apparent coldness with which he treated her at first. "O woman, great is thy faith !"

On the other hand, the faith of Thomas, who required to see and feel before he believed, was not commended. "Thomas, because

thou hast seen thou hast believed : blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed."

We learn likewise from the history of the Israelites, that they who believe only what they see and feel and touch, neither believe nor rejoice for any length of time. They soon dishonor God by their despondency, and bring upon themselves his displeasure. When Israel saw the power of God displayed against the Egyptians, " When the waters covered their enemies and there was none left of them, then they believed his word and sang praises," but the Spirit adds, " they soon forgot his works and waited not for his counsel." As soon as some new difficulty presented itself in the wilderness, their faith wavered, " they turned their backs and tempted God, and limited the Holy one of Israel. They remembered not his hand, nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy." Hence far from commanding their faith the Spirit of God says, " Therefore the Lord heard this and was wroth : so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel, because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation."

Let that unbelieving and rebellious people teach us not to tempt the Lord on every occasion, saying, " Is the Lord among us or not?" Let us cleave unto the Lord with a steadfast heart, knowing in whom we have believed. Let us dismiss as injurious to his faithfulness, all discouraging thoughts which may arise in our minds, when the Lord, to prove us, makes us to encamp like Israel in dry places ; let us press onwards, persuaded, that he who hath called us is faithful, and will not suffer us to perish by the way. Like Hezekiah, let us trust in the Lord, let us cleave to him, and not turn away from him.—*From the French of Rachat.*

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#### THE BLOOD OF CHRIST PURGING THE CONSCIENCE.

WHEN the gifted and eloquent John Randolph was on his death-bed, after communing with his secret thoughts for some time he suddenly roused himself and exclaimed, in his own shrill and piercing tone, " Remorse!" And again he repeated the word " REMORSE, REMORSE!" " Write it down," said he to an attendant, " and let me see it." " REMORSE!" Ah, there was a fire kindled upon the soul of the orator and the statesman, which no effort of his own was able to quench! Conscience of sin! Conscience awakened by the power of the Holy Spirit! Conscience startled by finding itself on the very verge of eternity! Conscience now mingled its upbraiding with the alarms of the divine law. There was no power to stifle its voice, nor to flee from it, nor to endure it. If strength of intellect, if enlarged and liberal views, if courage, or fortitude, or pride, or lofty self-respect and self-reli-

ance, could do anything for man in such a condition, they could have done it for him. But no man's hands can be strong, nor his heart endure, if left unaided to contend against the workings of a guilty and awakened conscience. God has written in our hearts a natural presentiment of his own inexorable justice; and his revealed law amply corroborates these premonitions of our hearts. The Lord is holy and will by no means clear the guilty. While men slumber in delusion and hardness of heart they may dream that God is too good to punish: or that repentance will sufficiently appease his justice. But when the Holy Ghost convinces of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come, all these delusions vanish. There is no longer a hope of mercy, save in a way in which God "*may be just*," while he justifies the sinner. Nature herself cries out for some *atonement*, some *propitiation*; and for this reason, the very heathen, not knowing Him "whom God had set forth to be a propitiation for sin through faith in his blood," resort to penances, self-torturings, and sacrifices. In this the conduct of the heathen as well as of the deluded Papist, shows that a *propitiation for sin* is among the wants of the soul. This was shadowed forth in all sacrifices and offerings of the Jewish law. Repentance is not enough; "without the shedding of blood there is no remission. There must be some sacrifice, some atonement for sin. Yet after all penances and sacrifices that man can offer, there still remains conscience of sin. No offerings, not even the blood of bulls and of goats, divinely prescribed in the Jewish ritual, can take away sin, or make the comers thereunto perfect, as pertaining to the conscience. Only one sacrifice has power to "*purge the conscience* from dead works to serve the living God," and that is, "the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God." This only can take away sin, and place the sinner as just before the divine law. This only can relieve the conscience from the load and fear of guilt. "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect: for then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshipers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins." But "we are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus once for all," who "after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God"—"for by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." "Having therefore boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having a high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, *having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience*, and our bodies washed with pure water."

This, and this alone, can reconcile us to God. This and this alone can give peace to the troubled conscience.

We shall be wise always to bear with us the remembrance of the irrepressible, inevitable, unendurable power of conscience. It is a part of our being. It will accompany us beyond the grave. It will be our companion forever. Its accusations we can never elude. Its testimony we can never corrupt. The bonds under which it holds us we can never evade. Before its tribunal we must stand for ever. Its condemnation is the sentence of God. Place us in security ever so complete against human laws, this holds us in adamantine chains. Be our offences ever so secret from man, before conscience they are in clear light as before the eye of God. The prisoner in the dungeon, the prince on the throne, the beggar cast out in distress and sorrow, and the rich man amid his millions of wealth, are equally under its power. *We must do right.* If not, the fires of conscience within us, and the justice of God upon us, bind us to eternal punishment. And when the stain of guilt is upon the conscience, nothing can ever wash it away, save the atoning blood of Christ. He that believeth not *must* be damned.—*Rev. Edwin Hall, D.D.*

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#### THE SINNER A ROBBER.

1. Great numbers can accuse him of robbery. For he robs God of services due him, Christ of faith and love, and the Holy Spirit of due regard. He robs his family of religious influence, the world of an holy example, the church of power he might employ in her service.

2. He commits robbery upon his best friends. Other robbers spare their friends, but not the sinner. He has no greater friends than the Father of mercies, and the kind Saviour, and the ever-blessed Comforter. But he invades the rights of them all.

3. And he robs them of the most precious things. The most valuable jewels in the sight of the above named friends, are the affections of the human heart. But the sinner hesitates not a moment to appropriate them all to himself. God is despoiled of them all.

4. He is a very bold robber. His crimes have been denounced by the Supreme Magistrate of the universe, and the most terrible penalties have been recorded, and have been set before his eyes, and made to ring in his ears. Indeed he has been, at times, not a little scorched by sparks of the Divine vengeance against his robberies; but he braves every threatening, and boldly faces every danger attending his course.

5. A most persevering robber is the sinner. He began very young, and kept steadily on through all the years of childhood and youth. Many reach manhood and go down into the vale of years, robbing all the way through. Nothing stops them. Promises, threatenings, mercies, judgments—all alike fail to stop the steady perseverance of the robber I am describing.—*New-York Evangelist.*